

Twice-taken penalty puts Blues second

Wycombe Wanderers 1, Southall 0

IN their last game before the F.A. Cup tie at Cardiff City, Wycombe Wanderers did nothing to boost their confidence on Tuesday night when they scrambled to an unconvincing victory at home to Southall. It took a twice taken penalty to earn three points — and that was the only way Wycombe were going to score (Writes Stuart Earp).

Perhaps it was the thought of the forthcoming Cardiff game, perhaps it was the poor crowd. But these are no excuses for one of the Blues' poorest performances of the season. In the end, they were downright lucky to get away with three points and if I were a Southall supporter, I would feel extremely disillusioned.

Had it not been for three excellent saves by goalkeeper Peter Spittie, Wycombe would have been well beaten and could have had few complaints. Spittie more than proved his worth and demonstrated what a useful replacement 'keeper Wycombe have. On this display, he would walk into

many other Rothmans Isthmian League teams.

Tactically, Wanderers played it all wrong on Tuesday night. They insisted on using the ball in the air from both midfield and defence and simply played into their opponents' hands. Only a handful of chances were created as mistake followed mistake.

One of the main surprises of the evening was the absence of Ray Eaton. The left back has played in two matches recently after dislocating his elbow in November. If he was to stand any chance of making the team at Cardiff, he had to play on Tuesday, but it seemed manager Brian Lee was not prepared to risk him. Dave Bullock therefore remained at full back while Spittie replaced John Maskell. Dave Alexander came into midfield with Kennedy moving up front.

In the early stages, Wycombe's approach work looked promising. Passes were accurate and they attacked dangerously. Many moves, however, broke down in and around the Southall penalty area and gradually, Wanderers became frustrated. They took 20 minutes to win their first corner and then Tony Horseman made a rare error in

putting the ball behind the byeline — it was the start of a whole series of mistakes.

There was the occasional chance, like in the 29th minute when Mick Hollifield headed over the crossbar and when Dave Alexander bent a swerving volley just too high. But goalkeeper Jarrett was rarely troubled and it was the Wycombe 'keeper who produced the best save of the half when he tipped over a rising drive from Alan Devonshire. This was Southall's best move of the game. Repley crossed from the top wing to Knowles who chested the ball down to Devonshire. He took a couple of strides forward and lashed in the shot on the turn. Spittie pulled out a marvellous save.

As in the 1-1 draw at Southall, Devonshire looked the best player on the field and his pace, skill and finishing must soon put him where he belongs — in the Football League.

Those hoping for an improved second half (thinking no doubt, that nothing could be as bad as the first), were disappointed. It was worse.

Despite the work rate of Terry Reardon, Southall still had the better of things in midfield while the Blues front runners, receiving poor service, hardly had a look in.

It was 'that man' Devonshire in fact who went closest to scoring again when he set off on a brilliant run in the 63rd minute. Gathering pace he cut inside Bullock on the flank and then repeated the trick on Keith Mead. He fired in a shot but saw Spittie thwart him again with another great save.

Wycombe replaced Horseman with Anthony after 67 minutes but even the Welshman couldn't settle. He seemed to catch the 'bug' and allowed two passes to slip under his boot and into touch as the crowd grew more and more impatient.

Spittie flung himself full length to cut out a cross from Devonshire soon afterwards but the game went from bad to worse in the closing stages. Both sides pumped the ball up into the air hoping for something to happen but despite the monotonous errors, it seemed the match was destined to end goalless, especially when Alexander and Devonshire were both caught offside when likely to score.

Then, in the 85th minute, Anthony took the ball into the box. Clough went in to tackle but caught Geoff's ankles and he went tumbling. Referee Isaacs, who didn't help the flow of the game with the constant use of his whistle, awarded the penalty which left Wycombe with something of a problem.

Regular penalty expert Horseman had been substituted and so Kennedy was designated to take it. Up he stepped and in keeping with the general standard of the game, lofted the spot kick high into the crowd. The referee, however, gave him a second chance as 'keeper Jarrett had moved. There seemed some confusion whether Kennedy should take the kick again but when the players had sorted themselves out, he made no mistake with his reprieve.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittie, P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, D. Bullock, A. Alexander, T. Reardon, M. Hollifield, A. Horseman (sub G. Anthony 66 mins), D. Evans, H. Kennedy.

SOUTHALL: A. Jarrett, G. Towers, H. Manoe, D. Clough, M. Heath, T. James, G. O'Rourke, C. Ropley, R. Fleming, R. Knowles, A. Devonshire. Sub C. Mullan (not used).

Referee: A. Isaacs (Barking).
Half time: 0-0. Goalscorer, Wycombe — Kennedy pen. (85).
Official paying attendance: 850.
Approx. total attendance: 1,000.



HOWARD KENNEDY
... second chance



TERRY REARDON
... hard work